

SPORT

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GRAHAMBean says
it's good
to be back
in actionBLUES MIDFIELDER IS 'GLAD TO BE
BACK OUT THERE HELPING THE BOYS'

WYCOMBE Wanderers midfielder Marcus Bean said it felt good to be back playing football after making his first appearance since November on Saturday.

Bean has been in the Blues' match-day squad since the trip to Hartlepool United on Saturday, January 16, but got his first taste of action in the 1-0 win over Plymouth Argyle at Home Park.

Having been an important member of Gareth Ainsworth's starting XI before picking up the ankle injury, Bean is now eager to re-establish himself at the heart of the Wycombe midfield.

"I have been ready. I have been knocking on the gaffer's door trying to get a game and he has put me in today," said Bean.

"It is just about competition for places and trying to keep your spot. Hopefully I have done enough today to keep my spot for the next game.

"I feel good now and I am glad to be back out there helping the boys."

Bean's extended time on the recovery table had seen Matt Bloomfield and Luke O'Nien develop a good partnership in central midfield.

Indeed Bean did not immediately return to the side upon recovering from the injury, but did have a reassuring presence during what was a keenly-contested match against high-flying Argyle.

He was therefore pleased to come through the test unscathed and is now focusing on remaining in good condition through recovery and training.

Bean said: "It is good that there is no game on Tuesday because I have a whole week to recover.

"It was a tough game and obviously playing a team that is near the top of the table means the intensity is quite high.

"Now it is just about resting up for the next couple of days and then getting back into training."

After the midfielder spent much of his recovery wearing a special boot to protect his foot, the club was keen to ensure there was no chance he could suffer a relapse upon returning to fitness.

The 31-year-old therefore had to be patient and trust in the advice of the Wycombe medical team, who he was quick to thank after playing the full 90 minutes of Saturday's away victory.

Bean explained: "There was no other injury it was just the ankle and I wanted to make sure it was fully healed because it was a pretty niggly one.

"There can be a complication if you don't get it right and I have to thank the medical team, and Cian (club physiotherapist Cian O'Doherty) for getting me back."

Loan spell extension
for popular defenderBOSS DELIGHTED TO KEEP MCCARTHY
IN THE SQUAD UNTIL END OF SEASON

JASON McCarthy has extended his loan deal with Wycombe Wanderers until the end of the season.

The 20-year-old arrived from Premier League Southampton in October on an initial one-month loan which has since been extended on two previous occasions.

McCarthy's deal was set to run out on Wednesday and manager Gareth Ainsworth was delighted to have secured the services of such a key member of his squad until the end of the season.

He said in a club statement: "Jason has applied himself superbly from day one and is a fantastic person to have around the club, on and off the pitch.

"I'm really happy to have extended his loan for the rest of the season and we believe it will help his development as well."

He has missed just 26 minutes of the Blues' campaign since joining the club and has played at centre back, right back and even in central midfield.

This versatility has played an important role in McCarthy becoming a key member of the Wycombe defence and led Ainsworth to suggest he is certain to go far in his career.

"He's performed brilliantly in a number of positions and is destined to have a long and successful career in the game," he said. "For us to be able to play a part in that and have him with us for a longer period can only be a good thing.

"I'd like to thank Southampton for continuing to entrust us with one of their young stars and I know they're really pleased with the progress he's making."

The youngster has two goals in his 16 appearances at Adams Park, and earned himself a special place in



Remaining at Adams Park for the rest of the season: Jason McCarthy following his winner against Oxford United.
Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

the hearts of Wycombe fans after he headed a derby day winner against Oxford United in December.

He has frequently reiterated how much he has enjoyed his time at the club and previously praised Ainsworth for helping him settle off the pitch and develop on it.

McCarthy spoke earlier in the month about how much he was enjoying his time at the club and pointed out the strong relationship he shares with the players, fans and

all the staff at Adams Park.

Meanwhile, Jermaine Udumaga has returned to Brentford after his loan deal at Wanderers came to an end on Monday.

The attacking midfielder made three appearances, all brief cameos as a substitute, during a stay of just over two months.

He showed glimpses of quality during his time at Adams Park and Ainsworth had words of encouragement for the departing 20-year-old.

Ainsworth told the club's website: "Jermaine showed plenty of promise during his loan spell and I hope he has taken plenty from his time with us."

Udumaga joined Wycombe with fellow Brentford youngster, James Ferry, and while Ferry returned to his parent club in January Udumaga's stay was extended.

Jason Banton has also left the club after his contract was terminated by mutual consent.

Ugwu ends drought to grab victory

GARETH Ainsworth was delighted to see Gozie Ugwu on the scoresheet after the striker grabbed the only goal of the game in Wycombe's win over Plymouth Argyle.

Ugwu had not scored since September 19, a run of 14 games, before he bundled home from close range in the early stages at Home Park.

Ainsworth was clearly pleased to see the man he signed on a free transfer at the start of the season find the net again.

"I am so pleased that he got on the scoresheet. You can see all the boys jumped on him in the celebration afterwards and they all know how much he has needed that goal," the manager said.

"Gozie has come into the team and

he has taken his opportunity. Goals are what he wants to produce and he has done it in Scotland and at Yeovil. He has just gone through a little barren spell at Wycombe Wanderers."

With a lack of goals being of paramount concern to Ainsworth – Blues' total of 33 is the lowest of any of the top 19 teams in League Two – regular goals from the strikers are a must between now and the end of the season.

While Ainsworth is not expecting Ugwu to shoulder all of the goalscoring responsibilities, he does feel the 23-year-old needs to start making the most of his qualities.

The Blues boss also suggested the need to develop players is indica-

tive of the way Wycombe is run and they often have to work with players who are not yet the finished article.

"He is a great kid and needs to know how big he is and how strong he is. He can be a thorn in defenders' sides," Ainsworth said of Ugwu.

"If I had better players that were the finished article they would all be at top clubs or moving on. We are Wycombe Wanderers, and I am not saying that we have to scrape the barrel, but we have to go lower in the barrel to get players out and turn them into top of the barrel players. Gozie has definitely got the potential to be a good, good striker with good pace who can play as a target man."



Gozie Ugwu

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Ainsworth defends players after injury feigning claims

By Harry Gray

GARETH Ainsworth has refuted claims made by Plymouth Argyle manager Derek Adams that one of Wycombe's players feigned a head injury during Saturday's win at Home Park.

The Blues held on for a 1-0 win in what was a contentious match which saw multiple flashpoints both during the game and at the full-time whistle.

Speaking in his post-match press conference, Adams accused Wanderers of time wasting throughout the match, and even went as far as to suggest players were pretending to have head injuries to stop the match.

"It started very early on in the game with the injury time. One of the players went down with a head knock and then it was his leg he was getting treatment on," Adams said.

"I can see that and everybody else in the stands can see that. That is not something that people come and pay their money for.

"English football fans do not want to see players going down with a head injury when they do not have a head injury."

Ainsworth was left understandably frustrated by Adams' assertions and responded by defending his players and highlighting that Wycombe's small squad means injuries are inevitable.

"We have such a small squad, the smallest in the Football League. My players play week in, week out and I cannot rotate," Wanderers' manager said.

"This is all we have here and I am not going to comment on something



Gareth Ainsworth and his opposite number Derek Adams were involved in a heated exchange after Saturday's full-time whistle.
Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

that is tit-for-tat and unprovable. I know my boys and I know they won't fake injuries."

The controversial match concluded with both managers involved in a melee that included members of both clubs' backroom staff and players as well.

Again Adams pointed the finger at Wycombe, this time claiming Ainsworth refused to shake his hand.

"You should always shake hands with your opponent, but he chose not to and I'm disappointed in him really," Adams said.

Video evidence supported Adams' argument that Ainsworth failed to shake his hand immediately after the full-time whistle.

It was the sort of incident that is likely to draw the attention of the FA's disciplinary board, but Ains-

worth refused to be drawn on what started the dispute.

"I am not going to comment on that. It is part and parcel of the game and both managers must show respect to each other. It is a big thing for me that you have to be respectful to each other.

"I can't comment on what the FA are going to do. I didn't see any major incidents at the end there."

BLUES: Ainsworth's pride after Argyle victory Home comforts for Wanderers

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth was full of praise for his battling players after they secured a 1-0 win over Plymouth Argyle on Saturday.

Gozie Ugwu's third-minute effort was the difference in a game that also saw 46-year-old Barry Richardson make his first appearance since 2005 after replacing the injured Alex Lynch.

He went on to keep the first clean sheet by a visiting team at Home Park this season and was part of a Wycombe performance epitomised by determination and commitment.

"I am really, really proud of the boys. They have given absolutely everything. They've given passion, desire and an absolute willingness to perform," Ainsworth said.

"Let's talk about the headers that we won, the tackles we won and the grafting and runs that some of my boys were making today. We have to

speak about the way we played and the sheer determination we showed."

While Ainsworth was understandably quick to stress the positives, which led to a fifth straight win at Home Park for Wanderers, it was impossible to ignore a number of controversial incidents in the match.

The players were involved in an on-pitch melee during the game and both teams' managers, backroom staff and players repeated the trick after the full-time whistle.

Perhaps the biggest turning point came in the first half as Jason McCarthy clearly pulled Ruben Reid as he set himself to shoot in the penalty area.

As the last man, the 20-year-old would surely have been sent off for the infringement had it been spotted.

Ainsworth, while claiming he could not make a clear judgement on the incident from his view, suggested that

Wycombe were due a favourable decision having been denied penalty claims of their own in recent weeks.

"During the game you look and you see an incident but you don't know what has happened. We have had a couple of penalty shouts go against us recently, and if one has gone for us it is part of this evening up business," said the Blues manager.

"In recent weeks we should have had at least one penalty and I have had feedback on that saying we should have had at least one.

"I am not going to talk about decisions and I just want to talk about the football. Every one of my lads is dead on their feet because they have given everything."

The result moved Wycombe back into contention for the play-offs and they are just one point and one place behind seventh-placed Mansfield Town. Collecting wins against

supposedly stronger sides has become something of a trait for the Chairboys, having already beaten Oxford United and twice led Portsmouth before drawing in the league.

Ainsworth said: "We had a great season last year and we are punching above our weight this year. I am sure Plymouth will be hoping we do it to the Oxford and the Northampton."

Plymouth Argyle: McCormick; Mellor, Nelson, Hartley, Sawyer, Threlked, McHugh, Jervis, Tanner (Brunt 66), Wyld, Reid. Subs not used: Bittner; Nardiello, Carey, Purrington, Rooney, Forster.

Wycombe Wanderers: Lynch (Richardson 15); Jombati, McCarthy, Pierre, Jacobson, Harriman, Bloomfield, Bean, Cowan-Hall, Ugwu (Thompson 80), Hayes (O'Nien 72). Subs not used: McGinn, Stewart, Amadi-Holloway, Kretzschmar.

Coach breaks records

PRAISE FOR THE DEFENCE IN
HELPING TO KEEP A CLEAN SHEET

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"The club is the way it is and we don't have a youth or reserve team so don't have anyone to draw on in an emergency, but I didn't expect to play."

The appearance also earned Richardson the record of being the oldest player ever to wear the Wycombe shirt.

In doing so he became the first keeper to keep a clean sheet at Home Park in League Two this season and spoke of the pride he feels in taking both accolades.

"It is bizarre, the boys in front of me were fantastic and I think we deserved the win. They are a good side and put us under pressure," he said of the clean sheet.

"At my age it is a great little thing to have."

With Lynch's hip injury set to keep him out for tomorrow's match against Luton Town, Richardson would be forgiven for thinking he may be in line for a surprise start.

However, he was clear that this appearance was a one off, and will have been relieved to see Ryan Allsop arrive on loan on from Bournemouth on Monday.

Baz did so well for side

BEAN: EMERGENCY GOALKEEPER
'WAS A CREDIT TO HIMSELF TODAY'

MARCUS Bean admitted he feared the worst when Barry Richardson replaced Alex Lynch during Wycombe's 1-0 win at Plymouth Argyle.

The 46-year-old goalkeeper entered the fray with around 15 minutes played at Home Park for what was his first competitive appearance since 2005.

Bean was therefore concerned when he realised the Blues would have to cope without first-choice keeper Lynch for the best part of 80 minutes.

"I was thinking 'God, it is going to be a long afternoon' to be honest with you," the Wanderers midfielder said.

"As a deputy coming in I can't say anything more for Baz (Richardson), it was an unbelievable performance from him and he was a credit to himself today."

SPORT

STAYING PUT

Blues boss' pleasure after McCarthy's stay is extended until the end of the season



Ainsworth delighted to have Allsop in squad



Picture: ACTION IMAGES

WANDERERS have signed AFC Bournemouth goalkeeper Ryan Allsop on loan until the end of the season.

The 23-year-old, pictured, has played 77 times in a fledgling career that has seen him appear in each of England's top three tiers as well as represent England at Under-17 level.

The move comes after Alex Lynch picked up a hip injury in Saturday's 1-0 win at Plymouth Argyle and Blues manager Gareth Ainsworth is delighted to have added to his depleted goalkeeping stocks.

He told the club website: "Bringing a player of Ryan's ability to the club is a big coup for us. He's a tall, commanding keeper who's an excellent shot stopper and he'll be a great addition to what is already a strong backline.

"I feel desperately sorry for Alex who was just beginning to establish himself as the number one keeper here and we really hope he makes a speedy recovery."

The move represents the second time this season the Blues have signed a player on loan from a Pre-

mier League side after Jason McCarthy joined from Southampton in October.

Ainsworth is now looking forward to working with Allsop and thanked Cherries manager Eddie Howe for allowing the deal to take place.

"I have a very good relationship with their manager, Eddie Howe, and it's down to him that we've been able to make this move happen," Ainsworth said.

Lynch is due to undergo a scan to assess the severity of his injury but as he is expected to miss Wycombe's

next match at Luton, so Allsop's arrival is very timely.

He is set to be handed his debut at Adams Park on Saturday with 46-year-old Barry Richardson returning to his role as back-up keeper.

He could have a vital role to play in the remainder of Wycombe's season should Lynch's injury prove to be serious in nature.

Allsop's sole Premier League appearance came in November when he was in goal for Bournemouth's thrilling 3-3 draw with Everton.

BLUES: Hatters are 'not going to be easy for us' Chairboys ready for a reinvigorated Luton

WYCOMBE manager Gareth Ainsworth believes his side must not take anything for granted heading into their match against Luton Town tomorrow.

A convincing 2-0 win at Kenilworth Road as recently as Boxing Day will have imbued the Chairboys with confidence ahead of the League Two match at Adams Park.

However, Luton have since appointed Nathan Jones as their new manager and Ainsworth is expecting an entirely different beast from the Town side his team comfortably overcame in December.

"It is never comfortable, it is always down to hard work and we need to give the same intensity when we head into any game," Ainsworth said.

"They have a new manager and are a big, big team who have been in the top tier of English football. They are going to be a strong side and it is not going to be easy for us. Like I have said before, anyone can beat anyone in this league."

Luton highlighted that message with a 2-0 defeat of promotion-chasing Mansfield Town earlier this month, but that is their only win in their last six league matches and they currently sit 16th in the League Two table.

The match comes after Wycombe ended a three-match losing streak in the division at Plymouth Argyle and a win could see them climb as high as fifth in the table.

Ainsworth is therefore eager to harness the positive mood fostered by the win at Home Park and be-

By Harry Gray

lieves his players will head into the Luton match in high spirits.

"It [the Plymouth result] was a big result for me after three defeats in the league and going out of the FA Cup," Ainsworth explained.

"It is as big a win as any I have had and we will go into the Luton match on the back of a good result and full of confidence."

Ryan Allsop is set to make his debut in the Wycombe goal after the 23-year-old arrived on loan from Bournemouth on Monday. He will replace Alex Lynch, who has damaged his hip muscle and is yet to be given a return date.

There is more positive news on Sam Wood, who is in contention to return after missing the trip to Plymouth with a back complaint.

The Blues manager also claimed that he may make changes in order to keep players fresh ahead of a week that sees them travel to Dagenham & Redbridge on Tuesday.

As the *Bucks Free Press* went to press, Wanderers were charged with misconduct as a result of events during their 1-0 win against Plymouth.

The charge comes as a consequence of two breaches of the FA's rules relating to the behaviour of players and/or officials.

Argyle have also been charged and proceedings will be conducted together with a result to be determined at a joint hearing. Wanderers have until 6pm today to respond to the charge.



Sam Wood could be in contention to face Luton Town tomorrow.

Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

'You don't ever lose the basics'

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE ARE THE KEY IN VETERAN GOALKEEPER'S EYES

BARRY Richardson said playing for Wycombe Wanderers in their 1-0 win over Plymouth Argyle helped to 'get rid of some demons'.

The 46-year-old made his first appearance since 2005 after coming on as an early substitute for the injured Alex Lynch during the win at Home Park.

That match in November 2005 saw Richardson suffer a broken leg in a 3-2 defeat against Cambridge United for Doncaster Rovers, and he spoke of the enjoyment he took from getting back on the pitch.

"It was ten years ago and I broke my leg in that game and was out for 12 months. I was a player coach. That (playing against Argyle) has probably got rid of a few demons," he said.

"It felt good and I don't think you ever lose the will to do it and the knowledge never goes away. I think the basics of goalkeeping are knowledge and experience."

"I have played pre-season games and played behind closed doors so it is not as if I haven't played. I haven't played competitively for ten years though."

Richardson looked confident throughout and dealt with the few chances that Plymouth created against a Wanderers defence that had rediscovered its solidity after three defeats in a row.

Despite the assured manner in which he took to his task, Richardson revealed after the game that he had not considered playing as an option before kick-off.

"To be honest it was never really on my mind. I did it when I was at Forest because we needed to send the young lads out on loan," he said.

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